The Pacer

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The Independent Voice of the University of Tennessee at Martin

Rising crime reports spark safety concerns at UT Martin

Marques Rice | Pacer Staff

As the University of Tennessee at Martin's student population continues to grow, the volume of crimes reported on campus is also trending upward.

Since Jan. 1, there have been 126 crimes reported to UTM Public Safety, according to data published in the Daily Crime/Fire Log. These reports range from simple traffic violations to major crimes such as burglary and rape. This number does not account for reports where students directly contacted emergency services for the City of Martin or those handled internally by the Office of Access, Compliance, and Title IX.

According the the 2025 Annual Security and Fire Safety Report, UTM public safety responded to three reports of stalking in 2023 and six in 2024. Thus far in 2025, public safety has received 16 reports of harassment and/or stalking.

Reports of sexual assault are also on pace to meet or surpass the number of incidents reported last year - Public Safety responded to 9 incidents of rape and/or fondling in 2024. Since Jan. 1, 2025 six cases have been reported.

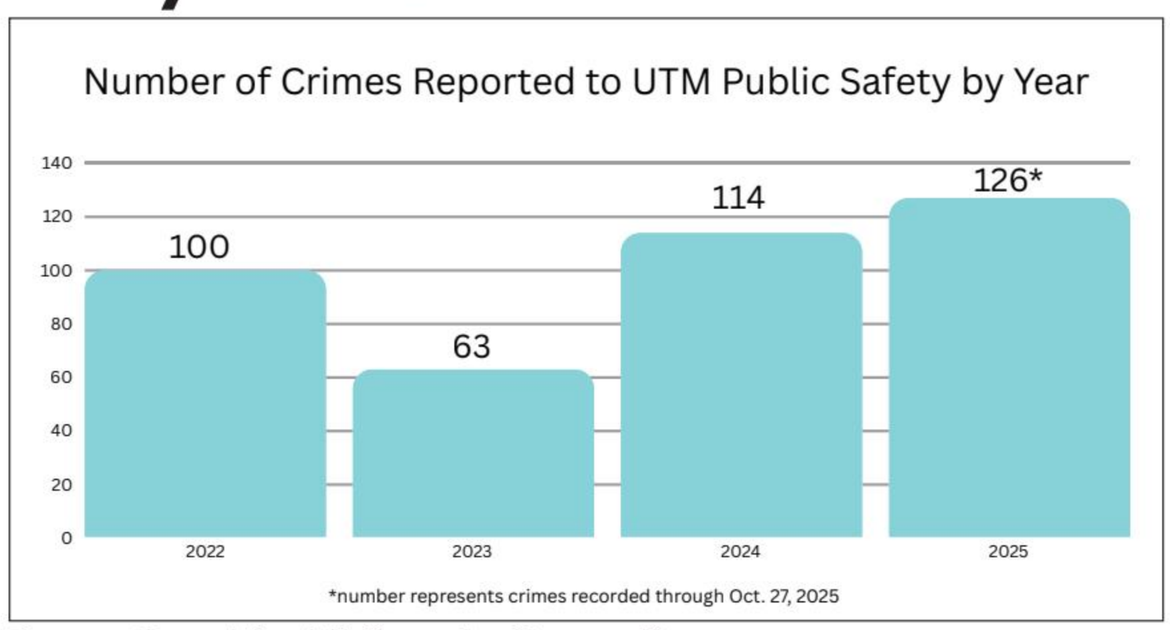
Many of these issues are handled by Campus Safety, Title IX or Student Conduct, with the outcome of those proceedings not openly reported.

"We have been working to have more consistent patrols around campus, along with increasing our presence during the nighttime to ensure student safety," UT Martin's Public Safety Director Michael O'Neill said. "We have begun to more tightly monitor the reports we receive and dive deeper into the leads we have on potential threats."

UTM students have begun to present their own issues regarding campus safety and their internal sense of security.

"Students have been requesting many things, such as more lighting around campus and more communication between administration and the student body," said Chayil Watkins, a junior agriculture-business major and current secretary-general for Student Government. "Student Government has been working alongside administration to better vocalize these concerns and much more in regard to creating a safer community and environment for everyone."

Students are urging administrators to take tangible steps such as improving lighting, increasing patrols, updating emergency technology and providing safety escorts after dark. They also advocate for open forums between students and public safety officials so concerns can be addressed directly and transparently.



Pacer Graphic / **(Miranda Conrad)**

University officials have acknowledged these concerns and stated that plans are underway to enhance security infrastructure and increase communication. However, many students remain skeptical until they see visible changes.

"During my time at UT Martin, I have consistently been told the same things over and over about improvements coming to the school, but nothing has changed" said Da'Amonie Hall, a senior nursing student. "As someone who has had late classes since freshman year, moving around campus at night is extremely scary due to the small number of lights around campus, along with the lack of public safety around the quad after a certain time."

Another layer of the conversation involves mental health and prevention efforts. Students argue that campus safety should not only address physical threats but also emotional and psychological well being. The school offers resources such as the CARE Team and on-campus counseling via Student Health and Counseling Services.

Allison Castleman, the current director of the department, said, "We are here for students who are struggling with anything. We are a resource for everyone. No matter the issue, big or small, stop by or schedule an appointment to speak with someone."

Skyhawk Basketball enters new era with first GM

Chyler Lee | Pacer Staff

In 2022, the Duke Blue Devils did something unprecedented in college basketball: they hired a general manager in response to the rise of NIL and the continued decrease in the amateur nature of college athletics.

Here at the University of Tennessee at Martin, the Skyhawks have tasked assistant coach Jawaan Holmes with the same. This is Holmes' second season with UT Martin, under head coach Jeremy Shulman, who described him as a "superstar" in the new general manager role.

"He's phenomenal," Shulman said. "This is the start of a big-time career for him as a GM, for sure."

Holmes was announced as the general manager of the UT Martin basketball team on May 1, but the concept of a GM role for the team came to fruition earlier in the year—in a phone call after the season ended in the spring.

"I was on the way home from the Final Four when I got the phone call from Coach Shulman saying that he thought this might be a great time to implement the role as general manager, and he thought I would be a great fit for it," Holmes said. "Being at the Final Four and going through all the seminars and breakout sessions...then talking to other coaches and GMs and things out there, it just made us realize how real it is."

A graduate of Fairmont State, Holmes has a degree in business administration and management, a background the team believed prepared him for this position. Holmes' official description as GM placed him in charge of tasks such as fundraisers, community outreach, current/prospective player evaluation, roster construction strategy and NIL negotiations.

Holmes described it as "wearing a lot of hats."

UT Martin Men's Basketball head coach Jeremy Shulman and general manager Jawaan Holmes watch the team practice at the Tom and Kathleen Elam Center in Martin, Tenn. on Oct. 23, 2025. **(Pacer Photo / Miranda Conrad)**

See GM (pg 10) for continued story

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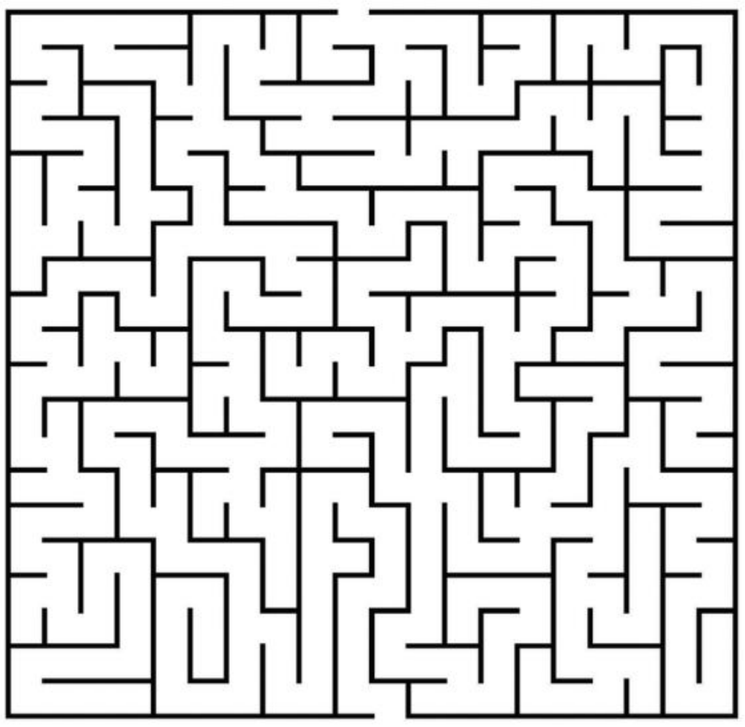
HAWK SPOT! activities on page 2

HAWK SPOT!

You do realize that's the cheap toilet paper, right?
Authenticity comes at a price.
Thanks! Pete's been preparing since August.
Aww! A witch and a mummy! You two look great!
You can't rush the craft.



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Seek Truth

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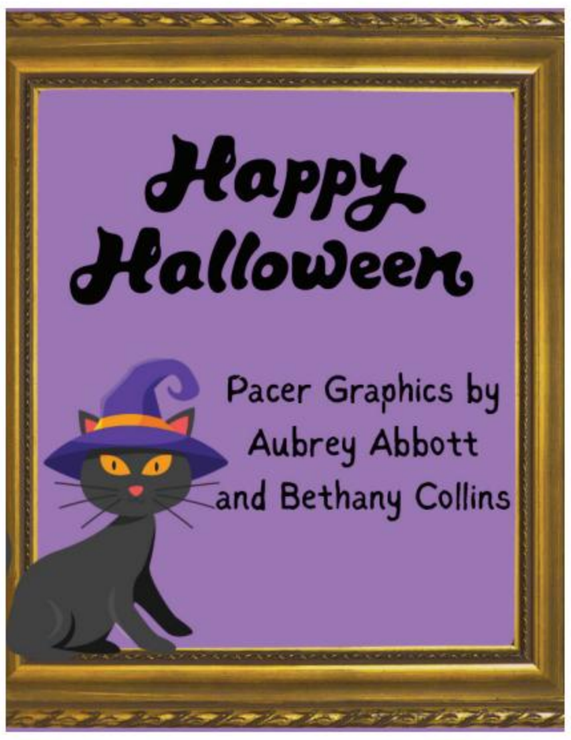

PACER EDITORS AS HORROR MOVIE STEREOTYPES

Most likely to...

Die first – Aubrey
Survive & Secret Killer – Chyler
Trip while running away – Adrianna & JJ
Interview the killer for a feature story – Ryleigh
Turn the chaos into a podcast episode – Bethany
The section the killer would target first – Viewpoints
Hide in the pacer office with snacks and Wi-Fi – Chloe
Accidentally summon something while editing late at night – Chyler

Enter if you dare: why fear feels so good

Bethany Collins | Pacer Staff

Your heart races, your palms sweat and every instinct tells you to run, yet we line up for haunted houses, horror movies and true-crime podcasts. I've always wondered why we do this to ourselves, why we chase fear instead of avoiding it.

Every year, like clockwork, spooky season starts in late August. Pumpkins, ghosts and witches pop up on porches and in storefronts everywhere you look. By October, plans get specific: a gory slasher like the "Terrifier" series or a trip to a haunted house, including local favorite 13th Realm in Atwood, Tennessee.

As a world-class scaredy-cat, I can't fathom choosing to get terrified "for fun." I don't like the sensation of looming doom, but plenty of my friends chase it and make a tradition of hitting the biggest, scariest haunt they can find. Here's my take after digging into the research: we love being scared when we control the frame. Inside a theater or a haunted house, we pay for a feeling we can pause, exit or laugh off with friends.

Psychologists even have a name for this: recreational fear, the act of seeking out safe, controlled scares for enjoyment. In a field study inside a haunted attraction, researchers strapped visitors with heart-rate monitors and found a "sweet spot" for fun.

Moderate fear was most enjoyable. Too little fear was boring; too much fear killed the fun. In other words, the best scares push you just outside your comfort zone, not miles past it.

The British Psychological Society explains it this way: playing with fear lets us test our limits in a safe frame, and that can feel good, even beneficial.

What's happening under the hood is not mystical. You step into a haunt and your body's threat-response system fires: adrenaline to mobilize, dopamine to reward you for staying engaged. In a safe context, that high arousal can flip into pleasure and relief once the scare passes. That chemical swing is part of why some people walk out of haunts buzzing while others vow "never again."

Personality matters, too. People higher in sensation seeking, the trait for craving intense, novel experiences, are more likely to enjoy horror and scary attractions. That pattern shows up across decades of studies, even if it is not the only predictor of who loves horror. Translation: some brains are wired to find a scare "fun."

There is also a quieter upside. Practicing fear in fiction may help some people handle real-world stress. During the pandemic, horror fans and the "morbidly curious" showed greater psychological resilience and preparedness than non-fans, possibly because scary media works like a mental fire drill. You rehearse disaster safety, then cope better when life gets messy.

Haunted houses are built to harness all of this. Good designers pace jump scares, give you microbreaks and let the tension rise and fall. That ebb and flow helps visitors hover in the "just right" zone where fear and fun peak together.

The loca angle makes it real. 13th Realm markets itself as a top-rated Halloween tradition with a midway, bonfire, live shows and clear content warnings. In other words, it provides a protective frame for your fear. You go with friends, you get startled, you laugh at yourself by the fire and you go home. The experience is intense but voluntary.

So where does that leave those of us who hate being scared? First, you are not broken. The "fun" of fear only works when you hold the exit button. If you are haunt-curious, aim for moderate intensity: pick a venue with posted warnings, go with people you trust and take breaks. If your body says "nope," listen. Opting out is also a control.

Here is my argument, then. We keep paying to be scared, because it lets us practice being brave without real danger. It is a rare place where you can feel your heart pound, choose to go on and walk out laughing. In a world that feels unpredictable, that small rehearsal for courage, together and in public, is its own kind of comfort.

I still will not be first in line, but I finally get why people are. Fear, in the right dose and on our terms, connects us to our bodies, to our friends and, strangely, to our calmer selves as we step back into the night.

Why is horror the most feminist genre?

Lauren Davis | Pacer Staff

The final girl trope has been done to death and will be until the end of slasher horror movies, but today we argue: Is horror the most feminist genre?

For those who aren't aware, the final girl trope follows a girl in a slasher horror movie to the very end and, more often than not, shows how she survives the film's events. There are plenty of films where men survive until the end, but today we want to center on the ones where it feels like the girls get all the spotlight. We have picked a couple of classics to focus on in chronological order: "A Nightmare on Elm Street" and "Scream".

A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984)

Nancy Thompson (Heather Langenkamp) is our main protagonist and final girl in this film. Freddy Krueger (Robert Englund) terrorizes her in her dreams, and the ending is left vague.

Nancy faces Freddy head-on and essentially wins, which was added at the last second. She finishes off the antagonist in a blaze and escapes into the sunlight to live the rest of her life without the fear of her dreams. At least, that's what we can infer.

She is the lone survivor of her friend group, which consists of two guys and one other girl, making her a great example of the final girl trope. When the odds are stacked against her—with a demon infesting her dreams and haunting her friends with bone-chilling kills that translate to the real world—she comes out victorious.

Scream (1996)

Sidney Prescott (Neve Campbell) is faced with a teen-killing slasher who is inevitably making his way toward her. In the aftermath of her mother's murder, she becomes the target of a rising killer and must fight for her life, all while not knowing if the killer is a friend or a stranger.

She cracks the code from the beginning by suspecting her boyfriend and follows the stereotypical "virgin, good girl" character type associated with final girls.

She only backs out of her assumption because of what remains of her relationship with him, bringing forth second thoughts.

She is one of the first to assume that maybe there are two killers, but she goes back on herself once again. The entire back and forth is frustrating to watch, but it proves how smart she is—using her encounters with the killer to try to paint a picture of who is after her.

In the end, when the killers Billy Loomis (Skeet Ulrich) and Stu Macher (Matthew Lillard) are revealed, she outsmarts both of them and manages to live to tell the story for the rest of the franchise.

She is one of the first to assume that maybe there are two killers, but she goes back on herself once again. The entire back and forth is frustrating to watch, but it proves how smart she is—using her encounters with the killer to try to paint a picture of who is after her.

See FEMINIST (pg 9) for continued story

How folklore keeps our past alive

Bethany Collins | Pacer Staff

Every Southern town has a ghost story.

Whether it is the haunted plantation down the road, the bridge where the "crying woman" was said to appear or the old courthouse clock that never struck midnight again after a tragedy, the South is built on stories that blur the line between history and hauntings.

These tales are more than eerie entertainment around a campfire. They are cultural heirlooms passed down through generations, keeping us connected to our shared past—to the people who came before us and to the places that shaped who we are.

Folklore in the South is not just about fear; it is about memory. From Tennessee's Bell Witch—the state's most famous ghost tale—to West Texas's mysterious Marfa Lights, these legends have told us what previous generations worried about, hoped for or could not explain.

Many of these stories were born from hardship. Enslaved people used storytelling to preserve memories of homelands, teach values and pass along hope and resistance when other forms of expression were policed or erased. That oral tradition endured, adapted and carried forward in the voices of families and communities.

You can hear those echoes in the historical recordings and narratives preserved by the Library of Congress. First-person accounts, songs and memories show how stories keep culture alive when written records are unavailable.

Even outside the South, scholars have noted that ghost stories boom in anxious eras because they allow people to discuss the hard truths—grief, injustice and fear—without naming them directly. That made them durable and revealing—not just spooky.

The point is: folklore is a living culture. It has adapted and endured because it is our "cultural DNA," a collective memory we have edited and retold. The stories we keep say as much about us now as they do about the past we inherited. As a Southerner, I have found the stories oddly comfortable in that.

Ghost stories remind me that our past is not gone–it lingers.

The old buildings we pass, the creeks we drive over and the towns we move through—all carry echoes of the people who were here before us.

Even in my own family, ghost stories linger. One tells of a Bible tape that suddenly changed into the voice of a woman crying in pain—a voice that was never heard again, no matter how many times it was rewound. Another recounts my uncles, who climbed the stairs of an old house built in the 1920s to find a fully finished attic, only to return later and discover it incomplete.

Stories like these live in every corner of the South. In Alabama, parents warn their children about Huggin' Molly, the ghostly woman who embraces people too tightly during the darkest nights.

See FOLKLORE (pg 9) for continued story

Vanguard Theatre presents production of 'Go,Dog Go!'

Ethan Tanner | Pacer Writer

Viewers, young and old, are encouraged by UT Martin's Vanguard Theatre to watch their fun and whimsical production of *Go, Dog. Go!* on Saturday, Nov. 8, at 3 p.m. in the Harriet Fulton Theatre.

Based on the beloved children's picture book by P.D. Eastman, this play is set to be a delightful retelling of the kids' story with fun choreography paired with a jazzy tempo.

This production will include an energetic cast from the University of Tennessee at Martin's Alpha Psi Omega honor society chapter, who will portray big dogs, little dogs and black and white dogs. After their larger-scale production of *The Importance of Being Earnest,* this cast is quickly preparing to impress an audience with this fun, youthful play written by Allison Gregory and Steven Dietz.

One of Vanguard Theatre's returning actors, Mark Mathis, a junior Theatre and Psychology major from Selmer, who will portray Spotted Dog, enjoys how simple yet active and unique the play is as a production.

(Pacer Graphic / Darby Self)

"I think the physicality of it is the strongest point and the point that I'm most excited about because this is a show for kids to enjoy, to come and to...move along with us. We want to do a lot of physical bits, a lot of comedy," he said.

One of the newest actors, Triniti Murphy, a freshman Theatre major from Union City, was inspired to join the production as she wanted to see how the audience would respond to her portrayal as Yellow Dog.

"[I love] the audience that it's focusing on, which are kids. I enjoy seeing smiles on their faces. And I think *Go, Dog. Go!* will make them laugh and have a good experience," she said.

Other actors, such as Duncan Hollis, Madalene Sisemore, Carlin Cochran Thomasson, Maggie Moffett and Director and theatre professor Melanie Hollis, hope that this play will attract plenty of family audiences since there are very few opportunities to view shows such as this one in the region.

"We should serve the public. We don't have a lot of children's theater in the area, so I hope that we can build on this, and I hope the kids will be excited about it and want to come back and see more shows," she said.

Hollis is confident that this production will be a great experience, as a first for UT Martin. "[*Go, Dog. Go!* is] an exploration of movement, color and space. The dogs delve into life with gusto, creating a visual spectacle. They snorkel. They howl at the moon. They sing and dance and climb trees. This is a rollicking free-for-all of chicanineery. A big and little musical world of doggy fun," she said.

Vanguard Theatre hopes that audiences will attend this "big dog party" on Saturday, Nov. 3. Admission will be $5.

Halloween flicks to comfort or frighten this season

JJ Somerville & Bryant Steele | Pacer Staff

In honor of the spirit of Halloween, my colleague Bryant Steele and I have curated a list of movies to cozy up to or that will give you absolute night terrors.

Pick your poison as you set out to enjoy the festivities that this year's spooky season will bring!

***The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)**

You can never go wrong with a timeless Tim Burton classic! This film follows the story of Jack Skellington (Chris Sarandon), who is depicted as "the King of Halloween Town." After he gets bored with the constant routine of frightening people in the "real world," he stumbles upon Christmas Town, filled with bright colors and festive spirits. Jack is amazed by this discovery and schemes to take over the holiday by plotting to kidnap Santa Claus! Will he succeed? If you've seen this movie before, then you know how it unfolds. If you haven't, watch to follow the misadventures of Jack and his friends as they try to grasp the true meaning of Christmas, while not forgetting the essence of Halloween.

(PG/Amazon Prime Video)

***Halloweentown* (1998)**

Life is turned upside down for Marnie Piper (Kimberly J. Brown) and her siblings when they visit their grandmother Aggie (Debbie Reynolds) in Halloweentown. Halloweentown is the only place where supernatural creatures can experience a normal life. When Marnie learns that she is a witch on her 13th birthday, she must help her mother and grandmother save the magical community from an evil force that is plotting to take over. Will this family of powerful witches save the town from the dark entity in time? Feast your eyes upon this widely popular DCOM (Disney Channel Original Movie) to find out.

(TV-PG/Disney+)

***Jigsaw* (2017)**

Jigsaw is the eighth installment in the iconic Saw franchise. The film follows a series of murders that all bear the markings of the infamous Jigsaw killer, John Kramer (Tobin Bell). Kramer was notoriously known for forcing his victims to play a sadistic game of life and death. After a long battle with terminal brain cancer, he was presumed to be dead for over a decade; however, law enforcement officials have traced him to the latest murders. They later find themselves involved in one of Kramer's twisted games. This leads to the question of: is Kramer truly back from the dead, or is there another copycat killer on the loose—wanting to finish what Kramer started?

(R/Hulu)

***Us* (2019)**

Is it "them" or "us"? If you have never seen a film written by the enigma Jordan Peele, you must make *Us* a priority to watch this Halloween. The story follows Adelaide Wilson (Lupita Nyong'o), accompanied by her husband and kids, as she returns to her childhood home. Adelaide is haunted by a traumatizing experience from her past, making her fearful that something terrible is going to happen. Her darkest fears become a reality when four masked intruders invade the house, driving the Wilson family to fight against all odds to survive. When the intruders unveil their identities, the family is terrified to learn that each attacker bears a resemblance to all of them. It is advised to proceed with caution when watching this type of film, as Peele doesn't shy away from gory content.

(R/Hulu)

***Scream* (1996)**

What's your favorite scary movie? If *Scream* isn't considered, you definitely need to check it out. This classic horror film defined the genre upon its release and changed the scary movie game forever. The first in a franchise of six (soon to be seven) movies, the original Scream was one of the first flicks to have a meta take on horror movies. The story follows the friend group of Sidney Prescott (Neve Campbell) on the anniversary of her mother's murder, as the Ghostface serial killer is stalking them. This movie defies expectations from the very beginning. The twists and turns will keep viewers on their toes right until the very end. Travel to the fictional town of Woodsboro, California, this Hallo-weekend and see if you can predict what happens next!

(R/Pluto TV or Hulu)

***Scooby-Doo* (2002)**

Need a spooky comedy full of fun for the whole family? Kick back with Scooby-Doo and the Mystery Gang as they solve the secrets of the tropical "Spooky Island" resort. Released in 2002, the first of two live-action *Scooby-Doo* movies actually manages to provide an entertaining adaptation of the beloved Hanna-Barbera characters. Although it's chock full of horrible CGI, it adds a certain kind of charm to the film. It is the kind of movie that's so bad, iWt's good. It has gained a cult following over the years, endearing itself to many young outcasts in the early aughts and onward. Speaking of *OutKast*, the iconic hip-hop duo actually produced a song for this film. It stays stuck in the heads of viewers, even past the credits. If you have never seen this time capsule to the start of the millennium, do yourself a favor and indulge in it this year; you will not regret it. Zoinks!

(PG/HBO Max)

***Friday the 13th: Part III* (1982)**

This classic film takes its viewers back to the early 80s. *Friday the 13th: Part III* is, in my opinion, the quintessential Friday the 13th chapter. This is mostly because the timeless killer Jason Voorhees (Richard Brooker) gets his iconic hockey mask in this movie. Although it follows the same format as the first two films, it still manages to stand out. One of the reasons it's so memorable is that it was created during the period in Hollywood when 3-D had a massive spike in popularity. It also has some of the best kills in the franchise. Being an older movie, its shocking scenes can be played for laughs instead of scares. It's worth checking out for those who wish to see the proving grounds for horror's most iconic killer.

(R/Peacock)

***Halloween* (1978)**

Debuting in 1978, the original *Halloween* film follows Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) as she fights for her life against her eternal stalker, Michael Myers (Tony Moran). The Shape, as he's called, is the unstoppable force that haunts the entire Halloween franchise. Although this classic is almost five decades old, it still holds up today. The scenes are still just as striking, if not more so, with the legendary score by John Carpenter, which strikes a sense of panic in the minds of audiences even today. *Halloween* is a sort of equilibrium point between older horror films. It's not too outlandishly silly, but it also does not take itself too literally. Many horror fans will agree that this is the definitive horror movie for the Halloween season. Watch the story unfold on the night Myers came home.

(R/PLEX)

Honorable mentions: *A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984), Scary Movie (2000), Halloween (2018), Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974) and Coraline (2009)*

Manga recommendation: 'Demon Slayer'

Lauren Davis | Pacer Staff

"If you are feeling disheartened, that you are somehow not enough. Set your heart ablaze. Dry your eyes and look ahead, because you may feel like digging your heels in, but the flow of time waits for no one."- **(Demon Slayer/Kimetsu No Yaiba Chapter 66)**

Demon Slayer's manga was released in February 2016, while the anime that succeeded it aired in April 2019. The anime was a smash hit and has been renewed for four seasons and two movies so far.

Demon Slayer: *Infinity Castle Arc* was released on Sept. 12, 2025, and became one of the top anime movies to hit theaters in the United States, outselling several American-made movies. In the height of the popularity of this movie, there are two installments left in the trilogy. This has left fans scrambling for more, especially anime-only watchers.

If you are one of the viewers searching for more content on *Demon Slayer*, or you want the immediate gratification of knowing the ending before 2029, we recommend reading the manga. *The Infinity Arc* leaves off at Chapter 156, and it provides readers a nice spot to start if they wish to finish the manga from where the anime stops.

To give a general overview of the *Demon Slayer/Kimetsu No Yaiba* franchise: Tanjiro Kamado is a boy from a family of coal salesmen sent down the mountain to sell coal in town for the winter. When he arrives home the following day, he finds his entire family slaughtered except his sister, Nezuko Kamado, and attempts to save her.

As he carries her down the mountain, it is quickly discovered that she is different; she has turned into a demon. He is allowed to prove himself and gain strength through the Demon Slayer Corps while also searching for a cure to turn his sister back into a human.

In turn, he is also given the mission to defeat the ultimate evil: Muzan Kibutsuji (the creator of all demons). The race against time for a cure, while also fighting for their lives against Muzan's demons, brings the anticipation up for the manga and provides an enticing ride for finishing the manga.

(Pacer Graphic / Darby Self)

If you haven't read the manga, we would recommend that you give it the chance.

If you would like a subscription to an app that has all sorts of manga, for three dollars a month, *Shonen Jump* has a ton of options in addition to the entire *Demon Slayer* manga.

HALLOWEEN HIT LIST
CALLING ALL THE MONSTERS - CHINA ANNE MCCLAIN
SOMEBODY'S WATCHING ME - ROCKWELL
THRILLER - MICHAEL JACKSON
MONSTER MASH - BOBBY PICKETT
GHOSTBUSTERS - RAY PARKER JR.
MAN EATER - NELLY FURTADO
THE ADDAMS FAMILY- ANDREW GOLD
CIRCUS - BRITNEY SPEARS
THIS IS HALLOWEEN - MARILYN MANSON
I PUT A SPELL ON YOU - JOHN DEBNEY

(Pacer Graphic / Adrianna' Carter)

2025 Homecoming King looks to shifts narratives

Marques Rice | Pacer staff

The University of Tennessee at Martin crowned Jeb Graves as the 2025 Homecoming King during halftime of the UT Martin vs. Western Illinois football game on Oct. 11, 2025.

Graves, a UT Martin sophomore majoring in accounting, is from Parsons, Tennessee. He is a proud member and representative of the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity. Outside of his roles and responsibilities on campus, he has a deeper connection to UT Martin as a whole.

"I chose UT Martin because I wanted a tight-knit campus community where I could really get involved and feel connected. It's also a strong family tradition; both sides of my family have attended UT Martin, so it already felt like home before I even stepped on campus," Graves said. "That sense of belonging made the decision an easy one."

Once Graves stepped onto campus, he wanted to get involved and immerse himself in the community around him. He found his way of doing so through Greek life.

"I was drawn to KA because of the brotherhood and the values it stands for. From the start, the active brothers made me feel welcomed and challenged me to be better—not just academically, but as a man. Since joining, my college experience has grown significantly. I've made lifelong friendships, taken on leadership opportunities and found a strong support system that I truly value," Graves said.

Many students have begun to view the Homecoming King and Queen titles as a popularity contest. Graves wants to change the stigma around those titles and become an outlet for the student body.

"As Homecoming King, my goal is to represent our student body with pride and help bring everyone together even after Homecoming. I want to support the events, encourage school spirit and create a lasting sense of community that extends beyond just one week. It's about honoring our traditions while building connections that last throughout the school year," Graves said.

Along with shifting the notion about his title as Homecoming King, he wants to be a beacon of light and cultural change in several areas around campus.

"I'd say I'm someone who believes in leading by example and giving back to the community that's helped shape me. I'm passionate about making a positive impact wherever I can, whether that's through KA, Homecoming King or just being a good friend and classmate. Also, I'm always open to new ideas and conversations, so don't hesitate to reach out or say hello!"

2025 Homecoming King Jeb Graves and Homecoming Queen Cara Brooke Hatler pose with 2024 Homecoming Queen Paige Glisson during halftime of the UT Martin vs. Western Illinois football game on Oct. 11, 2025 at Hardy Graham Stadium in Martin, Tenn. ***(Pacer Photo / Kaniya Anthony)***

2025 Homecoming Queen has lifelong ties to UTM

Ryleigh Ulen | Pacer staff

The University of Tennessee at Martin crowned Cara Brooke Hatler as the 2025 Homecoming Queen during halftime of the UT Martin vs. Western Illinois football game on Oct. 11, 2025.

Few people know the UT Martin community better than Hatler, a junior English legal studies major from Martin. Between being raised in Martin and having two UT Martin alumni as parents, the campus community has been a part of Hatler's life for as long as she can remember. Her hometown connection to both the campus and the city of Martin makes the title of Homecoming Queen even more rewarding.

"I think it means a lot more to me because I am from here," said Hatler. "I've grown up watching [UT Martin] and coming to all the homecoming festivities because my parents are both proud alumni of UTM, so it just means the world to me that I get to be a part of something that I've grown up watching my entire life, and it just makes me love Martin even more, and I've really enjoyed being a student here."

Hatler ran as the representative from Alpha Omicron Pi, where she serves as the Matching Coordinator on the Membership Recruitment team. Being a member of AOII has given her a sisterhood of people who support her in her ambitions, and her homecoming campaign was no different.

"...I think that really showed while I was running, that they were the first to stand up and help me, and they just supported me throughout the entire process," Hatler said about the members of AOII.

Hatler's infectious personality and commitment to the chapter made her the perfect candidate to be the sponsor from AOII.

"She was one of the first girls I got to know and became friends with. She's all things kind and caring; whether I hadn't seen her in three weeks or three days, she always goes out of her way to smile and say hey," said Ceci Rodriguez, a junior public relations major from Spring Hill, Tennessee, who serves as the Vice President of Programming and Enrichment for AOII. "I think I can speak for the whole chapter of Tau Omicron when I say that we are so proud of her and her campaign this homecoming. She's a beautiful representation of AOII and our values and our character, and I think she's also a great representation of Martin, too."

"Cara Brooke just does so much in AOII," said Mary Pitts, a veterinary technology major from Troy, Tennessee, who serves as the Vice President of Community Relations for AOII. "Anytime that we have community service events or we have any kind of ... sisterhood or something that the chapter does, she's usually there. She just likes to get super involved and do everything that she can for AOII, and we thought that she'd be a really great person to represent us this year."

After reflecting on the road to being crowned queen, Hatler is grateful for the chance she had to experience many of the different factors that make UT Martin the campus she's loved for years.

"I just really appreciate the opportunity to put myself out there; it was such a pleasure to get to meet a bunch of different people. I really got to see a bunch of different sides of UTM that I normally wouldn't have, and I think that alone has just been awesome," said Hatler. "I just really loved getting to meet everyone and just getting to be more involved in the campus."

With this year's homecoming celebration falling into the middle of UT Martin's 125th anniversary celebration, it seems right that this year's homecoming queen is a true representation of the community surrounding both the city of Martin and the UT Martin campus, and that's exactly what Hatler is.

Holland's House of Horrors returns to UT Martin

Ryleigh Ulen | Pacer Staff

Holland's House of Horrors returns to The University of Tennessee at Martin this Halloween weekend to give the local community a fright to remember.

Hosted by the University Scholars Program, the haunted house is designed as a walkthrough experience that transforms the Holland McCombs building into a host of mysterious rooms. Each room is designed with a different theme to keep guests on their toes what could be around the corner.

"The haunted house kind of turns... the McCombs building into a full haunted house. So, we'll go around the outskirts of the building... we do use ¾ of the building at least, there's about nine rooms with different themes in each to give a good scare to people going through," said Emma Self, a junior civil engineering major from Somerville, Tennessee, and the fundraising chair for the University Scholars Program.

Along with the themed rooms, this year's event will also include an outdoor section—providing a fresh take on the classic haunted house setup.

"We've got an outside area that we're going to kind of lead people through, so that's a new one that's going to be really cool," said Dylan Hembree, a senior environmental and ecological biology major from Charlotte, Tennessee. "That one's different...this is my third year doing the haunted house, second year heading it, and we've never had a group that [has] done a room...more into the outside section like we've got this year."

For the scholars who help run the event, seeing how everyone comes together to pull off an event as big as Holland's House of Horrors is one of the most rewarding parts of the experience.

"One thing that's really great is just seeing how the creativity of everyone comes together," said Hembree. "... the people in the rooms, we give them creative freedom, more or less, and seeing some of the ideas that people come up with is really cool. Just seeing everybody get to put together the rooms to create the whole house is really cool."

"I know in my room we have a couple freshmen, and you learn a lot about a person by going to the meetings and working together," said Emmalee Lattus, a biology major from South Fulton, Tennessee. "We've thrown out so many ideas, and different personalities come out, and it's so fun."

Holland's House of Horrors will take place on Oct. 31 from 7:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. and Nov. 1 from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Admission is $5 per person; cash is preferred.

If you are looking for a scare this Halloween, be sure to check out Holland's House of Horrors, if you dare.

Discovery Park hosts night of fun for UT Martin

Miracle Brown | Pacer Staff

Discovery Park of America welcomed University of Tennessee at Martin students, faculty, staff and Discovery Park members to a festive Halloween event on Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025.

The celebration, held at Pumpkin Village, featured a variety of fall-themed activities, contests and an outdoor screening of the beloved film *Halloweentown*.

Discovery Park of America, a world-class museum located in Union City, Tennessee, is a facility dedicated to inspiring curiosity and lifelong learning among people of all ages. Spanning over 100,000 square feet, the museum is filled with interactive exhibits on science, technology, agriculture, history and art. Overall, Discovery Park gives visitors of all ages and backgrounds the chance to explore, learn and discover something new within an engaging environment.

This event in particular aimed to bring together the local community and the UT Martin family for an evening filled with seasonal fun and togetherness. Guests enjoyed an array of activities designed to capture the spirit of Halloween while highlighting Discovery Park's ongoing commitment to community engagement and education.

Discovery Park of America's Pumpkin Village house at the Pumpkin Village event in Union City, Tenn. on Oct. 23, 2025.
(Pacer Photo / Chloe Kent)

Kids run through the pumpkin obstacle course at Discovery Park of Americas Pumpkin Village on Oct. 25, 2025 in Union City, Tenn.
(Pacer Photo / Chloe Kent)

For many attendees, the night was about more than just pumpkins and popcorn; it was a chance to connect with others in a unique setting. UT Martin student Paige Powers, a freshman veterinary science major, shared how much she appreciated the event and its atmosphere.

"Going allowed me to have a wonderful time with my friends, and being able to see other UTM students was a plus," said Powers. "I love Discovery Park, especially as a current student studying within the agriculture department, as their emphasis on showcasing the importance of the agriculture industry and this event brought both the fun and excitement of educating others together!"

The evening also marked a special milestone for Discovery Park employee Rayanna Fleenor, who has been a part of the organization for four years and played a major role in organizing the event.

"This event is a passion I have worked toward in the four years I have worked here," Fleenor said. "Last year we had a movie night, and this year we all boomed with so many fun ideas, and the turnout couldn't be better! We couldn't do it without our community!"

With music, contests and the charm of Pumpkin Village as a backdrop, the Halloween celebration successfully blended entertainment with community spirit, making it an evening to remember for all who attended.

Davis Gregory is a hidden gem within UT Martin

Chyler Lee | Pacer Staff

Though just in his third year as the University of Tennessee at Martin's sports play-by-play announcer, Davis Gregory has already made a name for himself as one of the best in the business. Despite his young career, Gregory is as professional as it gets and continues to collect the accolades to prove it.

As a kid who played Madden and NCAA Football, Gregory dreamed that he would one day be a football coach—while other kids' aspired to be an astronaut. However, after he called a junior varsity volleyball game between his high school—Christian Academy of Knoxville—and Alcoa High School, everything changed.

"I remember getting done and my broadcasting teacher, Mr. Blackwell, he was like, 'That was the best first broadcast I've ever heard in my life.' When I heard that in a sport I've never, ever, called before in my life, I knew nothing about, I just went in blind and just called it," Gregory said.

His work led him to be named a top-three finalist for best high school sportscaster in the nation and to the other side of the state to UT Martin and its acclaimed broadcasting program.

Richard Robinson, a professor at UT Martin and faculty advisor at WUTM, recalled when he realized Gregory was special.

"Once he got into about his junior year [of high school] I thought, 'This young man has got talent, he's got abilities, he's dedicated to doing this, he wants to learn his craft and do well at it, and he's got the potential to be very, very successful," Robinson said. "I think—personal opinion—he can go about as far as he wants to go, as long as he keeps working hard."

Becoming a Skyhawk

Gregory's first steps on campus were treated differently. As the stepson of UT Foundation president Kerry Witcher, and a highly touted broadcaster already, Gregory received VIP treatment from faculty and staff—especially Professor Robinson.

"Davis was very eager," Robinson said. "I recruited him like you might recruit a star running back."

From Gregory's perspective, there was just one thing on his mind—call games. Stories of travel to call games as a student from Skyhawk alumni and previous WUTM sports director, John Thornton, closed the deal for good. Gregory was destined to become a Skyhawk.

"I just had this feeling about—I love this place—This is awesome," Gregory said. "It's got a very home feel."

But after Gregory arrived on campus, his opinion shifted.

"I mean, I hated it. I hated Martin so much," Gregory said. "I remember telling friends, I was like, 'I'm transferring. After this year, I am out. I am done."

It was actually his relationships at the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) that made Gregory warm up to Martin.

"And I remember someone told me that a group of my friends from the BCM went to Sonic and it was four or five of them [that] went and prayed for me," he said.

By the 2020 Ohio Valley Conference women's basketball tournament, everything finally came together. Gregory called the entire season for a UT Martin team that lost just two games in the conference that year.

"They were so much fun to watch, and we were so good. We got to the tournament championship game and we lost and I was just heartbroken," Gregory said. "I remember feeling that heartache of, 'Oh my gosh, we lost.' [but] I'm like, 'Wait. You can only be that hurt about something if you love it.' And I think that was the moment where I wasn't just a fan, but [realized] I love Martin. This is my place. This isn't just the team I root for, but this is my school. This is home."

Gregory recalled his favorite memory from his WUTM career—a game-winning shot from Jordan Sears in the 2024 OVC tournament.

"It was like one of those movies where everything stood still and you see him pull up and the coaches…are like, 'don't shoot it, don't shoot it, don't shoot it'. And Jordan catches it, holds it for a second, pulls it, three, drained it," Gregory said. "I'm getting chills right now thinking about it. That was the loudest I've ever heard that gym in my life."

A true professional

Gregory now serves as the lead play-by-play announcer of UT Martin and regularly broadcasts for ESPN+. He was hired into the position just two months after he graduated in 2023.

In 2024, Gregory was a finalist for the Bill Shwanke Award-awarded to the top play-by-play announcer in FCS football. He was joined by three other announcers from around the country—each one with more than 10 years of professional experience in the field.

In his role as play-by-play announcer, Gregory has continued to improve his craft through research and pointers from Tennessee broadcasting legends such as Mike Keith and Bob Kesling. Both have given Gregory the tips and tricks needed to continue his own development in his career, particularly with things such as pre-game research.

Davis Gregory - ***(UT Athletics)***

"In school, you've got classes and you've got all this other stuff to get ready for. You have no time at all to make a card, but now it's your job," Gregory said. "You're getting paid to be prepared and there's another level to that and making your own cards."

Robinson noted Gregory's hours of preparation pay off during fast-paced gameplay.

"He studies and preps and I know John Hatler, who's served as his color guy, has told me, 'Somebody will make a play on the football field for the Skyhawks. I'm looking up the number. [Davis] already knows it."

Davis was allowed to reflect on his career so far, from high school junior varsity volleyball games to FCS playoff games.

"I know, for somebody outside looking in, it's like, 'Dude, it's UT Martin. Why do you care?' But I feel like, for me growing up and calling those games when I was a kid on my Xbox and Nintendo GameCube and calling them as I'm playing them and stuff like that…I feel like you would just be, oh my gosh, like this is awesome," Gregory said. "I'm getting to do all these things and being able to talk to people. I was starstruck when talking to Mike Keith on the phone. I was like, 'What in the world. This is insane!'

Mike Keith is the current voice of the Tennessee Volunteers and spent 25 years as the voice of the Tennessee Titans. Davis' career also reminded him every day that he does not have to be homesick anymore. Whether it is friends, coworkers or a family at church, home is in Martin.

"It's corny, but I think for me, Martin raised me from like this kid that wanted to leave within four days to someone who loves it here," Gregory said. "Just thankful for everything every day…I wouldn't change how anything happened, even though it's been hard, but I wouldn't change how anything happened."

Continued on pg 10

Folklore from pg 3

In Mississippi, bluesman Robert Johnson's legend endures—the tale of the man who met the Devil at the crossroads and sold his soul for talent and fame.

Across Louisiana's bayous, whispers of Rougarou, the Cajun werewolf, echo through swampy nights.

Each story is rooted in something deeper than fear—reminders. Folklore, superstition and faith are intertwined in a way that has defined the South's spirit. These stories have taught us that the past is never gone, it is stitched into our land, our voices and our imaginations.

Maybe that is why we have told these tales—not just to scare each other, but to remember. Sometimes, the ghosts we talk about are not meant to haunt us but to remind us of who we are.

Feminist from pg 3

In the end, when the killers Billy Loomis (Skeet Ulrich) and Stu Macher (Matthew Lillard) are revealed, she outsmarts both of them and manages to live to tell the story for the rest of the franchise.

She is portrayed as intelligent and relies on her survival instinct throughout the movie's events, doing well to outlive most of her friend group. The storytelling provides her with a strong character, unlike most other movie genres, where the strong characters are usually devoted to men.

These movies all have final girls who survive against the odds. Horror is definitely more of a feminist genre because the center has always been about men.

Male killers and male survivors made up plenty of movies over the years until the final girl trope came into play and put women into a place of power. It traditionally places the female character up against male slashers and proves that their strength and ability to survive are just as capable as any man's.

Using Sidney from Scream as an example, she outwits both Ghostface killers and manages to kill them on her own. She is stacked against two men, her former friends, and still comes out on top of the fight. She even manages to evade other replacement Ghostface slashers throughout the franchise, coming out on top in the newer movies as well.

I would dare say that she is one of the most notable examples of this trope and lives to tell the story in each new film. Even after growing up and gaining a husband and children, she never loses the badass quality of being able to survive and outsmart these phony killers.

Horror has showcased time and time again not only the dumbest characters ever seen by man but also some of the smartest final girl characters who survive even under the most dire circumstances. These movies are the epitome of "equal rights and equal fights" and are definitely worthy of being called feminist.

GM from page 1

Despite the appearance of the first college basketball GM in 2022, the position is not yet standard. In fact, UT Martin became the first team in the Ohio Valley Conference and one of the few mid-major teams to have the role—something Shulman took pride in.

"I said, 'You know what? I love the concept. Why does it have to be just for big-time, high-major programs?' We're trying to make UT Martin a big-time program. We're trying to make this a destination," Shulman said.

The role has allowed Shulman to direct his focus solely on basketball instead of make decisions for fundraisers or answer calls from agents. He can now ensure the product on the court is the best it can be.

"It's been phenomenal, because a lot of the things I listed for that position aren't things I enjoy. I don't enjoy trying to raise money...I don't want to have to worry about if an agent is calling. Agents are great. I'm friends with a lot of agents, but I still don't want to spend a whole lot of time just talking to agents," Shulman said. "I want to coach and watch film and player develop and improve as a coach as well. So, he's able to do all of those things. All that takes a big load off my plate, where I can do the things I need to do to help us, hopefully, win games."

UT Martin currently rosters eight freshman scholarship players for the 2025-2026 season, making them one of the youngest teams in the country—also a testament to the work of the general manager. Holmes described the Skyhawk recruitment and team-building process in three steps: Love, Develop, and Retain.

The Skyhawks are also unique in their background. The roster represents 11 countries from around the world. A strategy that might keep announcers up at night but has paid dividends on the court and in the community.

"International players really fit what we do. We really value the team game, unselfishness, real high basketball IQ, and the way a lot of international players have been taught from a young age," Shulman said. "The other thing is, every place is different, and I love Martin, Tennessee...Our international players come here, and the town loves them. The county loves them. And everyone loves the accents."

The unique approach has even drawn national attention as the NCAA and ESPN wrote about UT Martin. Shulman hopes this approach will continue to garner support from the community and grow into something bigger.

"I'd love to make this a new Gonzaga. Gonzaga started as a small, tiny school where no one knew what the heck or even how to pronounce it," Shulman said. "Now they're a powerhouse, but it took a vision, and it took a lot of hard work."

Another advantage the team believes a GM provides is retention. Shulman and his staff, with eight freshmen, are attempting to build the program from the ground up, which is not possible if players come and go. The ability to keep players in the system is integral to any team's success, especially in the modern era of college athletics.

"We've got a big-time GM and that GM's going to do everything he can to retain our guys," Shulman said. "I think it's going to get guys returning year after year, and just help build this into a big-time, big-time mid-major powerhouse."

Along with his job as GM, Holmes maintains his position as an assistant coach. That includes film watching and being on the court to coach players at practice and games. He said that is just who he is. However, Holmes did not deny that there is likely a day when assistant coach will not be part of his title, and he will be a full-time GM—but not today.

"It could be this year, could be next year, it could be the year after. Not really sure, but the balance isn't hard," Holmes said. "This is just one hat that I embraced and that I was willing to do."

Holmes will get to coach the players he brought to UT Martin on the hardwood, as the team starts their season against UNLV on Nov. 4.

GREGORY from pg 9

You would be hard-pressed to find someone who has a bad experience with Davis Gregory. Someone so ingrained in the community, Gregory's reputation as a professional preceded him, but what does a peek behind the voice look like?

"It's just a follower of Jesus. If I'm not doing that then nothing else matters to me," Gregory said. "I could make that call for a tournament championship or I could be on CBS calling the national championship, but people who see me as a broadcaster or anything but a follower of Jesus, then that doesn't matter at the end of the day."

Despite his established love for Martin, he still misses things from his hometown. When asked what he could bring from Knoxville to Martin, he answered instantly, "Bojangles. Easy."

"Just picture it. Everybody gets a fried chicken biscuit in the morning going to a game. Skyhawks score, you get 'pick one get one free' at Bojangles today...I mean I could go on and on about Bojangles. Boberry biscuits, Cajun fillet biscuit, the two-piece leg and thigh dinner combo with double season fries. Sweat tea!"

For anyone interested, he recommended the following meal for breakfast: Cajun fillet biscuits with Bo rounds and a sweet tea.

Whether Gregory stays in Martin for another two years or two decades, those who knew him when he called high school volleyball know he has endless potential.

"Davis is special, he's a special young man," Robinson said. "I'm hopeful that the opportunities will arise and he'll get to move on at some point and go higher. I know he can, and I think he will. I do."

BASKETBALL from pg 11

UT Martin shot over 35% from beyond the arc in 2023-24. The team then saw a 5% dip in 2024-25 as they finished with just above 30% from three-point range. UT Martin redshirt junior guard Kenley McCarn shot the ball extremely efficiently in 2023. McCarn saw a 10% decrease from beyond the arc in 2024 at a subpar 27%. McCarn is the only returning starter for UT Martin.

There are plenty of new faces on the court for UT Martin this season, as only four players from the previous season have returned. As a result, nine new players were added to the Skyhawk roster as McMillan looks for vast improvements in 2025.

UT Martin opens the season at home as they host the University of Tennessee Southern Firehawks on Oct. 29 at the Kathleen and Tom Elam Center at 5:30 p.m. UT Martin has not faced UT Southern in almost three decades, with their last matchup that took place during the 1996 season. UT Martin has a record of 2-0 against UT Southern.

UT Martin then travels to Florence, Alabama, to take on the Northern Alabama Lions on Nov. 3. UT Martin was defeated by Northern Alabama in a close game, 66-63, in 2024 and has an all-time record of 1-4 against them.

UT Martin returns home to host the Tennessee Volunteers for the 2025 Pat Summitt Heritage Classic on Nov. 9 at 2 p.m. Summitt, a hall of famer, played four years at UT Martin and coached at Tennessee from 1974 to 2012 before she died in 2016. In Summitt's 38 seasons as head coach, she put together an impressive win-loss record of 1,098-208.

TITUS from page 11

Like most athletes, Titus has a "pre-game ritual" or something she does before a matchup to get into the swing of things. Titus mentioned how she watches her own highlights from previous matches.

"I actually watch my own highlight reel. It sounds self-absorbed, but it's really just a great way to look at situations that I've been in and say, 'Okay, I can handle whatever scenario is thrown at me.' And even in my highlight reel, I can sit down and analyze, maybe I didn't like X, Y or Z things that I did and can fix that today. It really just gets in the right mindset of calm and confident," said Titus.

Like most on campus, Titus is a student too. She is currently has a major in interdisciplinary studies, but plans to switch to political science for the spring semester of 2026 so that she can attend law school, which has been a dream of hers.

"My dream for a long time has been to go to law school. So I think that political science with the legal studies focus is probably the best jumping point for that," said Titus.

Now, what are some of Titus' hobbies? She enjoys books–that can vary from almost any genre of book she mentioned–hiking trails and video games in her free time.

"I read a lot of fantasy romance, and then I'll also just read academic stuff, like niche subject books," said Titus. "Especially in the summer, I go hiking and paddleboarding anywhere I can. Video game-wise, me and my best friend were really into Overwatch and Marvel Rivals for a period of time."

One may wonder, how does Titus balance out all of this as a student but also an athlete? The short and simple answer, she "goes with the flow."

As mentioned, Titus does have law school in her plans, but she hopes to become a professional women's soccer player.

"The dream would be to get a professional contract anywhere in the U.S.. A lot of girls end up overseas, and that's definitely exciting, but all my family is here, and I'm so family-oriented."

Student-Athlete Spotlight: Mac Titus

Connor Butts | Pacer Staff

#1 Mac Titus walks and defends against the SIUE Cougars on Oct. 26, 2025. ***(Pacer Photo / Emilee Lassiter)***

For this edition of Student-Athlete Spotlights, welcome Mac Titus.

Titus is a red-shirt senior goalkeeper for the University of Tennessee at Martin Skyhawks women's soccer team. Her love of soccer came from her family. Both her father, Eric Titus, and uncle, Jeff Titus, played at the collegiate soccer level for the Auburn University at Montgomery Warhawks. She also mentioned how her grandfather was their travel ball coach, and through that, soccer just came naturally to her.

"My dad and my uncle played college soccer together at Auburn Montgomery, and their dad was their travel ball coach for the longest time. And so it was kind of just a natural for me to end up playing soccer," said Titus.

All of that said, Titus does not play the same position as her relatives, who were field players. Titus did not become a goalkeeper until her sophomore year of high school at Chelsea High School, where she played with the Chelsea High School Hornets. Titus was named to several awards in that sophomore season, such as Female Athlete of the Week, All-County, All-Region and All-State.

"So I wasn't always a goalkeeper. I only became a goalkeeper between my freshman and sophomore years of high school. Up until that point, my dad and my uncle were obviously field players, as was I. So my dad, especially, would always be knocking the ball around with me. He was my little league coach when I was younger, and he always has tips and tricks after a game, just knocking the ball around with him," said Titus.

UT Martin was not always Titus' first choice, nor was it her first college soccer team. Titus spent one season with the Mississippi State Bulldogs in 2022 and one season with the North Texas Mean Green in 2023. Titus said one of the biggest reasons she came to UT Martin was the personal relationships she has built with the staff members and how each of them knows her name; it felt harder to do at the bigger schools.

"Here at UTM, it feels like I could walk into any of my staff members' offices and they'd know who I am and know how the game went the night before, and I could have an actual conversation with them. Whereas I think at much bigger institutions, there's not that personal connection with everybody," said Titus.

Another reason she came to UT Martin was the women's soccer head coach, Mike Varga. Titus credited Varga as a major reason why she came to UT Martin after he attempted to recruit her not once but two times– successful on the second attempt. When Titus was recruited the second time, she committed to the school and team even without had visited the campus.

"I'm so grateful that Coach Mike recruited me the second time I was in the portal as well. The first time, I turned him down. Then he recruited me again, and I was like, he's a great guy, it has to be a sign. I committed before I even saw the campus just because I had so much trust in the relationship I had already built with Mike just over the phone," said Titus.

It is clear that Varga thinks highly of Titus, and when interviewed about her, he had nothing but great things to say.

"Mac takes a lot of pride in her goalkeeping and is one of the most gifted goalkeepers that I have had the pleasure to coach. She (Titus) makes her teammates earn every goal they score in training and is fearless in net. I am proud of Mac and what she has overcome to get to this point. She has been difficult to score on this year, and I am confident in saying that she is the top goalkeeper in the Ohio Valley Conference," said Varga.

See TITUS (pg 10) for continued story

UT Martin Basketball seeks improvements in 2025

Nate Szarzynski | Pacer Staff

UT Martin Men's Basketball team runs drills at the Tom and Kathleen Elam Center in Martin, Tenn. on Oct. 23, 2025. **(Pacer Photo / Miranda Conrad)**

Men's Basketball

The UT Martin Skyhawks men's basketball team searches for its identity in Head Coach Jeremy Shulman's second season with the school.

UT Martin struggled to establish an offensive identity throughout the 2024-25 season, with Shulman's team starting numerous games with a big deficit. These deficits would be too big a hill to climb and resulted in losses throughout the season. UT Martin finished the season with a record of 14-19. UT Martin also had the most one-possession losses in the NCAA Division I ranks with 14.

UT Martin announced that the school and Shulman agreed to a contract extension that locks up the head coach through the 2030-31 season. Shulman now has the time to build this program the way he sees fit. Shulman emphasized versatility in year one. The team showcased many different ball handlers who had a willingness to shoot the three-pointer. UT Martin made 306 shots from beyond the arc, which is the second most in the school's history.

UT Martin goes on the road to Las Vegas, Nevada, for the season opener to take on the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Rebels. UT Martin has yet to defeat UNLV in their three all-time matchups. The last matchup resulted in an 85-55 loss in 2013.

UT Martin returns to host the Kentucky Christian Knights for the home opener on Nov. 9, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. UT Martin demolished Kentucky Christian in their one and only meeting in 2024 with a final score of 114-61.

Shulman's team returns to the road to take on the Bradley Braves on Nov. 12, 2025. Bradley has defeated UT Martin in all three matchups between the two schools all-time. The most recent game in 2012 resulted in an 80-57 loss.

To avoid a slow start to the season, Shulman and company will need to break the losing streaks against the two programs and earn a couple of hard-fought wins.

Women's Basketball

The UT Martin Skyhawks women's basketball head coach Kevin McMillan and his team look to rebound after a disappointing 2024-25 season.

UT Martin took a step back last season, with a record of 13-19, with 10 of those wins from Ohio Valley Conference play. The team's kryptonite was their inability to knock down three-point field goals at the same rate as they did in the prior season.

See BASKETBALL (pg 10) for continued story

UT Martin Volleyball looks to make comeback

Isaiah Murphy | Pacer Staff

The Ohio Valley Conference Women's Volleyball Championship will begin in a month, and the University of Tennessee at Martin Skyhawks look to turn their season around and continue playing deep into the tournament.

This is a very young roster, with over half of the team made up of freshmen and sophomores who have shown exceptional promise. Head coach Jaclynn Wilson affirmed that this is a young team ready to prove themselves.

"We've really struggled to come out on top in a lot of matches," Wilson said in a post-game interview on Oct. 10. "Coming off of a loss last night that we thought we could win, we were ready to fight. I keep telling the girls that at some point you need to stand your line, and we're on our home court and we have something to prove, so I think we were locked in and fired up to play."

Freshman middle blocker Carly Mueller, sophomore outside hitter Kylie Surratt and freshman opposite hitter Sienna Wnetrzak have averaged at least one kill per set in conference play this season. Surratt has led the team in kills per set with 2.97. Freshman outside hitter Ella McFarland has led the team in blocks per set (conference play) with 1.50.

Another player who has stepped up this season is team captain and senior outside hitter Kayla Bryant. She has 103 kills on the season and currently averages 2.98 kills per set.

The team's conference win against rival Western Illinois on Oct. 10 was one for the ages. The five-set thriller win at home showed the team's chemistry and skill. In the game against the Leathernecks, Bryant recorded a season high 17 kills.

"In the locker room, we're screaming, we're happy and we've been waiting for that feeling, and we finally got it tonight. It needed to happen," Bryant said.

She also attributed part of the team's win to the home crowd advantage, with how loud UT Martin students and fans in the audience cheered.

"There were multiple times where I had goosebumps. It was amazing," she said.

Coach Wilson spoke on how the team knew it would be a challenge when it came to conference play and earning a spot in the tournament.

"That was our first conference win; we need a lot more of those to make the tournament in mid-November. They take the top eight teams. We've got to find a way to get some wins. In our conference, no one [is] really beating each other. There's no one really sitting at the top; that makes it even more challenging to get in when you don't have a couple at the bottom fighting. We're really focused with one at a time right now," Wilson said.

#3 Kristin Phillips and #9 Kylie Surratt prepare before serve against SIUE Cougars at Skyhawk Fieldhouse on Oct. 17, 2025. ***(Pacer Photo/Emilee Lassiter)***

When asked about players who have stepped up, Wilson named red-shirt freshman libero Abby Freund and freshman setter Ava Peters.

"We're super young. We have two freshmen who I think are making big impacts and big strides for us. Our libero, Abby, and our setter, Ava. They've been recognized within the conference as freshman of the week, both of them. For freshmen, they are making huge impacts for us," Wilson said.

This is a team that has proven they can win games. They came close on Oct. 23 with a 3-2 loss against the Tennessee Tech Golden Eagles. A loss in five sets proves they can go the distance. This is a hungry team that can make the OVC tournament if they want it badly enough.

UTM Soccer dominates SIUE on senior night

William Stevens | Pacer Staff

The UT Martin Skyhawks found their first home conference win since 2023 in dominate fashion against the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Cougars 5-1 during a rainy senior day.

In the first half, UT Martin held SIUE scoreless and tallied a 3-0 lead. Skyhawk junior forward Peyton Cook struck early in just the fourth minute of the game, Cook found an open slot in the bottom left of the goal to punch it in for the first score of the game. Red-shirt junior midfielder Allie Buchmann added to the score which marked her first goal of the season in the 18th minute. To round out the first half scores, freshman forward Alexandra Weihs found a hole in the bottom center of the goal for her first of the season alongside Buchmann.

UT Martin's defense shined alongside the offense in the first half and allowed SIUE only two shots with neither of them on goal.

The scores continued in the second half for UT Martin. In the 51st minute UT Martin sophomore midfielder Unni Wolf, like Buchmann and Weihs, scored her first goal of the season. The fifth and final goal for UT Martin came from Cook in the 73rd minute when she found the bottom of the goal again.

The defense did not allow the lone SIUE goal until late in the 89th minute. Red-shirt senior goalkeeper Mac Titus had yet another clean sheet with three saves in 75 minutes played. Titus was backed up by UT Martin red-shirt senior Molly Corgan who totaled two saves but allowed one goal.

Now with the regular season over, on top in goals was Cook with six goals, three assist and 15 total points. On top with assists was UT Martin freshman forward Addy McCleary with zero goals, four assists and four total points. Ten of players on the roster were able to achieve at least one goal and nine were able to find assist. For the goal keepers, Titus, in 16 games, totaled 80 saves and allowed just 12 goals; Corgan in one game totaled two saves and one goal allowed and UT Martin junior goalkeeper Jordyn Riffle in three games totaled 13 saves and allowed three goals.

UT Martin is locked in as the sixth seed for the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) Women's Soccer Championship taking on the seventh seed SIUE Cougars on Oct. 30 in St. Charles, Missouri. Coverage of that game can be found at thepacer.net.

UT Martin Skyhawks gather at the game on Oct. 26, 2025, at Skyhawk Soccer Field. ***(Pacer Photo/Emilee Lassiter)***

Here are the current standings for the OVC.

In first place stands the Tennessee Tech Golden Eagles. They have moved up one spot from the previous standings.

In second place, the Little Rock Trojans move down one spot from the previous rankings.

In third place, the Lindenwood Lions stand tall and keep their position from the previous standings.

In fourth place, the Eastern Illinois Panthers stay from their position from the previous standings.

In fifth place, the Southern Indiana Screaming Eagles also stand tall and stay in the same position from the previous standings.

In sixth place, the UT Martin Skyhawks continued the trend of no movement in positions from the previous standings.

In seventh place, once again a team has no movement from the previous standings in the SIUE Cougars.

In eigth place, the Southeast Missouri State Redhawks stay in eighth, same as the previous standings.

In ninth place, the Morehead State Eagles have no movement from the previous standings.

In 10th and last place, the Western Illinois Leathers, like most other teams in the standings, stay at 10th from the previous weeks.